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revisited**

CBW

Coach and Bus Week

The PSV industry's news weekly • 17 May 1997 • Issue 269

**AHEAD OF
THE GAME**
**Fleetmaster
responds**



ONE STEP to the FUTURE

Wright's Floline leads the way


- All the PSV News 6-14 ● Tour News 17 ● Legal News 18&19 ● Marksman 20 ● Diary 21 ● Letters 23
- Cover Story 25-27 ● Fleetmaster 28&29 ● Deals 30&31 ● Back-Up 32 ● People 55



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Coach and Bus Week is published by Emap Automotive, part of Emap Business Communications, Wentworth House, Wentworth Street, Peterborough PE1 1DS
Tel 01733 467000 Fax 01733 467154

Editor
Mike Morgan 01733 467139
News editor
Mark Williams 01733 467140
e-mail: Mark.W@emap.co.uk

Production editor
Frank Forster 01733 467142
Tourism editor

William Golden 01733 467141

Northern news editor

Andrew Jarosz 0113 2566505

Designer

Tina Golden 01733 467143

Advertisement manager

Hugh Cairns 01733 467151

Classified advertisement manager

Julia Hinkins 01733 467144

Senior sales executives

Neil Mason 01733 467147

James Pask 01733 467145

Sales executive

Leanne Dow 01733 467148

Classified telesales executive

Natalie Coe 01733 467146

PA to publishing director

Lisa Wilson 01733 467157

Group production manager

Nicky Curd 01733 467121

Production assistants

Debi McGowan 01733 467123

Suzanne Porter 01733 467124

Publishing director

Mark Barton 01733 467136

Managing director

Ian Griffin 01733 467007

Subscriptions 0181 956 3015

Emap Readerlink, Audit House, 260 Field End Road, Ruislip,

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Coach and Bus Week ending 17 May 1997



Uniform accessibility standard is lacking

HAILED variously as a 'window of opportunity' or 'one step into the future', Wrights' Fline concept is a commendable solution to the halfway-house thinking which has produced the uniquely British lowfloor bus.

Wright's is a classic example of an ambitious company that prospered by backing a firmly-held belief and taking a calculated risk. It adopted the bolted aluminium Alusuisse body system in 1977 and was first to embrace lowfloor buses in 1993. Its reward is a step-growth expansion which has tripled the size of its Ballymena factory and doubled its workforce since 1990.

But its latest innovation, the Fline, was also a risk. The idea is brilliantly simple - it's been done before - but a large question mark hovered over its acceptability. Would it meet approval from the Disabled Persons' Advisory Committee (DPTAC).

DPTAC is an industry by-word synonymous with accessibility and Wright's was wise enough to seek its involvement because its influence is wide-spread.

However, the commendable efforts of DPTAC to improve passenger access and comfort lack the force of law. Local authorities throughout the land seem able to pick and mix DPTAC recommendations with the consequence that there is no uniform national standard.

When fitted out to comply with the 1997 DPTAC legroom

standards the Wrights Fline Renown featured in this issue seats only 41. Alternatively, it can seat up to 47.

Local authority tender specifications insisting on side-by-side wheelchair space imply full-width vehicles, ruling out narrow-gauge midis.

Commendable unless you happen to be a small operator hoping for tender success.

Large groups can reshuffle their vehicle pack and pull in a suitable vehicle but not the small operator.

Manufacturers' build slots are in short supply so the chances are that you can't get what you want in time for the start of the contract. So you turn to a rental company and pray it has a vehicle spec that matches that of the local authority.

Yet a wide variation in standards exists such that what is favoured by Nexus in Tyneside does not match Merseytravel or Greater Manchester PTE.

What we need is a uniform standard agreed by the operating and manufacturing industry that can be enforced nationally. DPTAC does not have that necessary bite and, with a European Directive on the horizon, it is unlikely to get it.

Mike Morgan,
Editor



events

21 May: Conference on School Journeys, New Policies into Practice, at The Royal Aeronautical Society, 4 Hamilton Place, London W1. Details from Sally Scarlett, director, PTRC (Planning and Transport Research and Computation), Glenthorne House, Hammersmith Grove, London W6 0LG, tel 0181 741 1516, fax 0181 741 5993, e-mail: ptrc@cityscape.co.uk

24-25 May: AEC Society 14th Annual Road Run and Rally, Wollaton Park, Nottingham. Details on 01509 216272

1 June: Valley Lines Festival of Transport, and Bus & Coach Wales, Barry Island, Vale of Glamorgan. Details from Glyn Bowen, on 01443 693087

1-6 June: 52nd UITP Congress, Stuttgart, Germany, includes Worldwide Exhibition of Public Transport running parallel from 2-5 June. Details on 32 2 673 61 00 or fax 32 2 660 10 72

12 June: Buses Without Meeting, Fred Tallant Hall, 153 Drummond Street, London NW1, 7pm. Details from Ian Johnston, 3 Cypress Drive, Fleet, Hants GU13 9HE

22 June: 2nd Classic Auto-Motion historic vehicle exhibition, Transport Research Laboratory, Crowthorne, Berks. Details from W. Ackroyd, 1 Hawthorn Road, Send, Ripley, Surrey GU23 6LH

11-13 July: Mobility Roadshow, Transport Research Laboratory, Crowthorne, Berkshire. Details from Jacqui Jones or Jan Gethings, tel 01344 661010 or 01344 661020. Fax 01344 661009. Email mavis.dot.crow@tnet.uk

1-5 September: 25th European Transport Forum Annual Meeting, Brunel University, Uxbridge, London. Details and full copies of call for papers on 0181 741 5993, fax 0181 741 5993

21 September: Titan Day, Amberley Museum, West Sussex. Exhibitors contact Alan Lambert, 7 Nursery Close, Emsworth, Hants P10 7SP

Coach and Bus

On course to float

MTL Trust Holdings has appointed former Ford executive Dr Henry Shirman its managing director of operations in the run-up to flotation.

Dr Shirman will be concentrating his efforts on the mechanism which will help MTL go public... predicted to happen in Spring 1998.

"We have made no secret of our plans to float MTL Trust Holdings," said group chairman and chief executive Peter Coombes.



Dr Shirman: ex-Ford

Coach and Bus

Coaching wages slip behind

COACH drivers' wages have slipped well behind those of bus drivers, according to a survey from the Transport and General Workers Union.

The survey - which looked at 120 companies representing 41,000 bus industry personnel - discovered a bus driver average of £4.97 an hour and a coach driver average of £4.23. Bus drivers worked an average 39.2-hour flat week, while coach drivers have to work more than 42½ hours... longer hours and lower pay

than the average minibus driver in the survey.

The T&G survey was produced by the Labour Research Department. In the main, respondents worked in bus companies with coaching interests, as opposed to coach operations.

The report says that bus drivers' conditions of employment are "fractured and depressed." So serious is the situation, it says, that should the £4-an-hour national minimum wage be imposed, 69 wage

agreements at 86 companies will be affected - around a quarter of all agreements.

Average hourly rate for municipalities was higher overall, at £5.33. Of all privately-owned groups, Stagecoach recorded the lowest hourly rate, of £4.72.

The survey warns that the phasing out of Profit Related Pay in January of next year will force a complete pay review at most of the major bus companies.

Coach and Bus

BUSK in

SCHOOLS transport pressure group BUSK is to press deputy prime minister John Prescott for more seatbelt legislation.

The organisation wants a School Transport Act which will:

- Ensure levels of funding for quality school buses
- Ensure children forfeit their right to public transport if they misbehave
- Underline the 'in loco parentis' duties of the local authority.

And BUSK is press-

ing ahead to make seatbelt retrofit a licensed industry.

National organiser Pat Harris says a new working group has the support of several coach operators as well as Monmouthshire Labour MP Huw Edwards: "The working group is likely to be split into perhaps six sections," said Mrs Harris.

She said she has had messages of support, and offers of help, from operators, including Bebbs and Epsom Coaches, while

Coach and Bus

NEG set up in Norway

NATIONAL Express Group has entered a joint venture with a Norwegian bus operator to take advantage of Scandinavian and German privatisation.

Concordia Bus is 63 per cent NEG owned, and 37 per cent owned by the 400-vehicle, Oslo-based Schoyen Group. Schoyen has 800 staff, and turnover of £30 million.

The board is headed by Schoyen's president, Frode Larsen, as chairman



Phil White: deputy and NEG chief executive Phil White in the deputy chairman's seat. Concordia will tender for public transport contracts while investigating privatisation deals.



"OUR EXPERTISE? PRIVATISATION AND EUROVISION"

call for new laws

Schools Transport act on agenda

by Mark Williams

Confederation of Passenger Transport representation is likely to come from the local chairman, Bev Fowles, md of SWT subsidiary Brewers Motors.

"I expect operators will be involved in the section dealing with seatbelts and schools transport supervision. I know that Bev Fowles is particularly keen on improving the

quality of vehicles by using staggered school times to increase efficiency," said Mrs Harris. "It's an idea which won't suit all councils."

Mr Fowles said his interest in becoming part of the working party depended on its aims: "Mrs Harris has promised me details, but I haven't seen them yet," he told CBW.

"When I've got them, they'll have to be

run past CPT, but I recognise that the industry and BUSK share a lot of common ground and will endorse any reasonable safety and quality measures."

He said his own studies of staggered school start times suggested that 40 per cent of schools journeys could be linked, using a single vehicle, and that authorities should use the savings to enhance journey quality.

"If not we will get to

a point where buses are quite simply in poor supply for schools, with a diminishing number of operators interested in this business," said Mr Fowles.

● A HIGH Court injunction granted to seatbelt installer Barry Hall Installations to prevent publication of the company name in conjunction with the vehicle pull-tested by BUSK (CBW, 8 February) has been lifted. Mr Hall supplied the belts which were tested.

Inside TRANSIT this week

News

Question: what do you do when all the bus companies in Britain have been sold? Answer: look abroad. Stagecoach already owns Sebus. All the other big groups are known to be at least talking in Europe and National Express chief exec Phil White tells *Transit* this week just why and how he's going about it - in Europe and Australia.

One of the biggest passenger transport mysteries of our time is why there aren't more guided busways in Britain. They're relatively cheap and easy to build. And passengers love them. As phase 111 opened in Leeds last week, FirstBus was claiming passenger growth of over 40 per cent in two years.

Elsewhere, Trent finds that real-time information has been the key to a nine per cent increase in loadings on its innovative Cotgrave Connection service. And Mairline's 60-minute time-based ticket has broken all forecasts in its first three months.

Meanwhile, it's back to more traditional bus-operating tactics in Scotland and the North East. FirstBus has taken the fight to Stagecoach in Fife and both Stagecoach and HMB Buses are claiming victory in Newcastle's latest bus war.

Now, what's the French for the more things change, the more they stay the same...?

News extra

What does the latest big bus takeover mean for the people of Brighton? Local bus supreme Roger French talks enthusiastically to Noel Millier.

Features

Last issue: why franchising is bad. This issue: why franchising is good. Could it be anything to do with the election?

Analysis

GM Buses North finally succumbed to the FirstBus chequebook in April 1996. What sort of company did FirstBus buy? Full P+L analysis this week of GMBN's last 12 months of employee ownership.

Plus

Latest tender results from Berkshire, Devon and South Yorkshire. Find out who won what with our exclusive analysis. All this...and two pages of latest jobs and tenders. Isn't it about time you got your own copy? Fill out the form on the inside back cover of this issue. NOW.



First Drive: low-floor Volvo B10B LE has independent front suspension and one-step Foline

▼ Bus

Test drive joy for the Wrights' 'baby'

A SMOOTH ride for passengers and drivers is a welcome feature provided by Volvo's electronically-controlled independent front suspension on the B10BLE.

Tested by CBW editor, Mike Morgan, on a brief drive in north east Belfast, the 245 bhp lowfloor bus carried Wrights' ground-breaking Renown bodywork using the innovative Foline system.

Steering is light and positive, brakes reassuring and progressive, acceleration rapid and 50 mph cruising relaxed.

The ride was equal to the very competent B10L. Body roll is so well controlled that it encouraged fast cornering - a trick not recommended when carrying passengers in wheelchairs. Engine is Volvo's familiar DH10A Euro 2 with EDC and

gearbox options include ZF 5HP500, ZF 4HP500 or Voith D863.3.

There's a choice of rear axle ratios, giving a range of maximum speeds from 40 mph to 61 mph.

● Wright's Renown is the first European 12-metre lowfloor bus with gasket glazing - a consequence of extra strength under one-step sloped gangway.

■ Full details - pages 8&9



In brief

Wot, no cars?

CAR-FREE countries by early next millennium was one of the predictions made in the first in a series of 'strategic visioning studies' hosted by CSC Computer Sciences. Also predicted was a decrease in leisure travel with the growth of 'pleasure domes' like Center Parcs.

Williams deal

ACIS has acquired the assets of competitor Williams Industries. The two companies have won most of the UK contracts for bus fleet management and real-time passenger information systems over the past two years.

Open topper

AS part of its 10-year celebrations, Thames Transit is introducing a scheduled bus service from Oxford to Woodstock with a vintage open-top bus from 28 May through to August.

Enviro study

STANGER Science and Environment has been awarded a three-year research contract by the DoE to investigate pollution concentrations and numbers of airborne particles in the UK.

Winners' day

THERE were 3,163 company insolvencies in England and Wales in the first quarter of 1997 on a seasonally-adjusted basis. This was a fall of three per cent on the previous quarter and a decrease of six per cent on the same period a year ago, says the Department of Trade and Industry.

New O-discs?

COACHES and buses could follow trucks with new O-licence disc design or even electronic tags. The Freight Transport Association is liaising with DoT research into new discs for HGVs.

Coach and Bus

Volvo share below half

League leader but pattern emerges

by Mark Williams

THE April registration figures see Volvo's sales drop below half of the market for the first time this year.

The manufacturer has a history of starting the year more strongly than it finishes. In January, it had 51.5 per cent of the coach and bus market, which rose to 51.6 per cent, then dropped to 51.1 per cent, then 46.7 per cent as each further month's figures were added to the running total.

Last year, the pattern was similar, Volvo ending 1996 with 42.5 per cent of the coach and bus market. It was even more dramatic in the coach sales, where 70 per cent of the market in January 1996 turned to under 54 per cent of it by December. This may be

the result of Volvo buying decisions from the big coach operators resulting in Winter delivery.

Dennis still stands in second place head and shoulders above its competition in both coach and bus sectors, its market share up 1.5 percentage points this month on the running totals, up 3.3 per cent points on its share of the coach market, and up 0.7 percentage points in the bus sector.

Deliveries of Ikarus and Van Hool-bodied vehicles have lifted DAF's share of the coach market to challenge Scania, while some of coaching's rising stars, such as Iveco, are still awaiting promotion to the league table.

The pattern of vehicle type, month by month, is represented in the graph (below). Predictably, coach regis-

COACH AND BUS REGISTRATIONS

	April		Year to date			
	1997	1996	1997	%	1996	%
	units	units	units	%	units	%
Volvo	169	186	623	46.7	650	47.8
Dennis	143	128	392	29.4	334	24.6
Optare	28	22	81	6.1	74	5.4
Scania	42	48	78	5.8	123	9.1
DAF Bus	32	18	44	3.3	56	4.1
Bova	10	14	26	1.9	17	1.3
Others	22	47	90	6.7	105	7.7
Totals	446	463	1334	100.0	1359	100.0

COACH REGISTRATIONS

	April		Year to date			
	1997	1996	1997	%	1996	%
	units	units	units	%	units	%
Volvo	78	123	262	50.4	397	62.0
Dennis	41	31	83	16.0	70	10.9
Scania	13	18	46	8.8	54	8.4
DAF Bus	32	15	44	8.5	31	4.8
Bova	10	14	26	5.0	17	2.7
Others	14	34	59	11.3	71	11.1
Totals	188	235	520	100.0	640	100.0

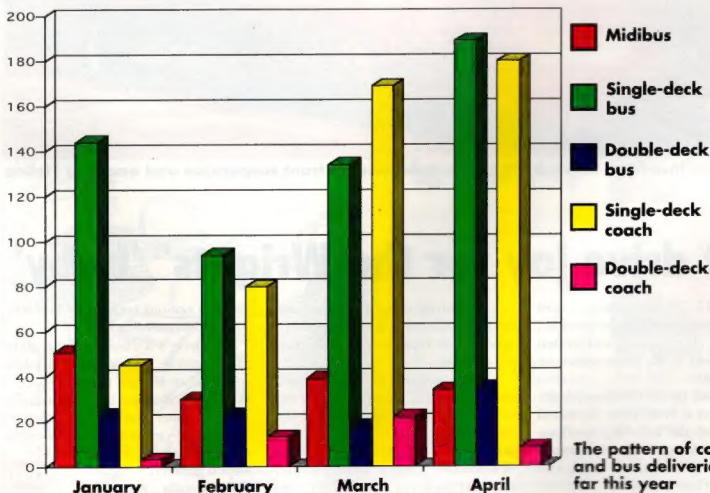
BUS REGISTRATIONS

	April		Year to date			
	1997	1996	1997	%	1996	%
	units	units	units	%	units	%
Volvo	91	63	361	44.3	253	35.2
Dennis	102	97	309	38.0	264	36.7
Optare	28	22	81	10.0	74	10.3
Scania	29	30	32	3.9	69	9.6
DAF Bus	0	3	0	0.0	25	3.5
Others	8	13	31	3.8	34	4.7
Totals	258	228	814	100.0	719	100.0

The above table details all vehicles on designated PSV underframes registered last month in Great Britain, Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man and Channel Islands. Source: SMMT

trations rose as the season approached. Double-deck bus sales are holding steady, having established a comeback

last year. The midibus boom seems to have stabilised, and the single-deck bus deliveries are gathering pace. **CSW**



The pattern of coach and bus deliveries so far this year



The Business... as usual.

The Metrorider is the bus to beat. With over 3,000 in service all over the world it is widely regarded as way ahead of any vehicle in its class. In short... it's the business.

In its latest form Metrorider 4 offers state of the art technology and engineering, featuring a lower floor. With heavy duty mechanical components, the Metrorider 4 is built for durability in all operating

conditions. A new, optional, easy clean hard trim interior finish makes maintenance easier too.

Metrorider 4 comes in three lengths and two widths. Its integral construction offers optimum comfort for passengers and an optional enlarged driver's compartment makes it extremely rewarding and safe to drive.

Another superior vehicle, from Optare, as usual.



OPTIMUM, THAT'S OPTARE

▼ Bus

Wrights adds dimension to

Renown's Floline system is hailed as a major

by Mike Morgan

LOWFLOOR pioneer, Wrights of Ballymena, is leading the field again with what it claims is the next generation of easy-access bus.

Managing director Jeff Wright says the Northern Ireland bodybuilder's Floline has given "a whole new dimension to lowfloor."

He said: "Floline takes the pain out of lowfloor." It's a new concept resulting in a smoother flow of passengers throughout the saloon and Wrights has applied for a patent. There's just one step in the gangway without resorting to complex componentry. And, it's the first 12-metre lowfloor bus which retains structural rigidity without using bonded glazing.

Most previous lowfloor designs adopted in the UK are compromise solutions with hampered access to the rear resulting in separation of passengers between the lowfloor platform at the front and a raised gallery at the rear. This cluttered arrangement is thought to alienate able and disabled passengers alike.

The secret behind Wright's solution lies under the floor.

First Floline is the £105,000

Wright Renown on Volvo B10BLE chassis. This chassis retains the conventional B10B rear-engined layout with horizontal engine driving through in-line ZF automatic gearbox. The front end module incorporates Volvo's IFS electronically-controlled independent suspension from the three per cent more expensive B10L which has an off-set driveline.

Floline's floor has a shallow ramp from the entrance to eliminate one of the two 200mm steps. There is more space under the floor used by Wrights to add critical strength to its own design of underframe, which is pre-stressed when connected to front and rear chassis modules. Consequently it has gasket-mounted windows.

Gradients in the floorline vary between five degrees in the entrance, and 2.15 degrees between there and the 200mm step up to the rear gallery - where the gradient is five degrees. Footstools are confined to a maximum of four points on the Renown - the double seats directly ahead of the rear wheels (and above the fuel

First 12-metre lowfloor



Windows of opportunity: gasket glazing more economical

Regional Round-up+++



▼ East Midlands

More Notts minis

THE 240-vehicle fleet of Nottinghamshire Social Services has risen a further 10 with the addition of Mellor Coachcraft Iveco 49,10 and 59,12 accessible minibuses (above).

The vehicles have Ricon Cleary wheelchair lifts, mounted at the rear doors, and a newly-designed interior: "We decided some years ago that quality of life was an important factor for our passengers and my team wanted to provide something better than the 'wipe-clean' austerity that had become the norm for this sector," said transport manager Peter Farrow.

▼ Nottingham

Service relaunch

NOTTINGHAM City Dial-a-Ride has been re-launched with five, new Whitacre Transit conversions thanks to £93,000 of National Lottery money.

The £145,600 order from Nottingham Community Transport provides minibuses with side-mounted power lifts and other accessible features.

▼ Wiltshire

Plea to NatEx

CRICKLADE is calling for National Express to allow its vehicles to pull off the A419 bypass and give the village a national connection.

The stop was taken off the route a decade ago but locals now believe the Post Office coach stop could muster enough passengers for a re-

launch: "We are asking National Express what its criteria are on passenger numbers," said the council clerk.

If things stay as they are, residents are faced with a nine-mile connection to Cirencester or six miles to Swindon.

▼ Lancashire

Blackpool system

BLACKPOOL Transport now has Almex' A90 Eurofare data system installed on its one-person operated fleet of 250 buses and trams.

The Blackpool fleet and the former Fylde Blue Buses fleet now have the red, Almex electronic machine, which replaces Fylde's Timtronic system and Blackpool's Wayfarer II. The A90 handles stored fares and collects data which can be downloaded for analysis.

▼ Staffordshire

No ban for driver

RUGELEY Magistrates let Leeds coach driver Marc Ryan keep his over-endorsed licence after he clocked up a third speeding offence.

Mr Ryan was caught doing 13 mph over the 50 mph limit on the A51 in an 18-seater and was fined £60 and ordered to pay £30 costs. He told the magistrates that being targeted by police is "an occupational hazard."

"I stand more chance of being caught up in something like this than someone who drives to the shops every day," he said. The court decided a ban would impose unnecessary hardship on Mr Ryan.

a new access

design breakthrough

and air tanks) and two single inward-facing seats ahead of the front wheels.

Total unladen weight of the 44-seat prototype is 10,400kg. Wrights says 47 seats and 19 standing passengers could be accommodated but should 1997 DPTAC standards be applied, the Wrights Renown on B10BLE holds 67 passengers, 41 of them seated.

Before launching the Floline system on the Renown, engineers subjected a development vehicle to rigorous tests - for one and two-door applications - at the Motor Industry Research Association in Warwickshire.

The Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) was invited to inspect and approve the design.

With 85 per cent standardisation across its entire Alusuisse range, Wrights expects to extend Floline into other products such as the Scania underframed Axxess Ultralow which will be renamed Axxess Floline.

Chassis geometry will determine whether Dennis Dart or Volvo B6LE-based vehicles can be adapted.



One step to the future: first Floline is Wrights' innovative Renown on Volvo B10B LE

Orders taken for Floline

WRIGHTS has taken pre-launch orders for the Floline Renown. FirstBus has specified that 102 of the 247 Wrights buses in its 1997-99 new vehicle programme will be Renowns on B10BLE.

The first 52 of these are scheduled for delivery to four of the group's fleets - Greater Manchester, Bristol Omnibus, Calderline and Northampton Transport.

New design on way

A NEW design of lowfloor minibus is on the drawing board according to Jeff Wright, md of Northern Ireland-based Wrights of Ballymena.

He says the bodybuilder has patented a design which has been taken to a major chassis manufacturer. The company already claims the UK's most comprehensive range of lowfloor buses after being first to embrace the concept with its ground-breaking Pathfinder in 1993. Most recent launch is Renown with its Floline floor sys-

tem, combining one-step interior and low maintenance gasket glazing for the first time in a European 12-metre accessible bus.

Meanwhile, Wrights has developed an economically-priced manual ramp.

Making its debut on the launch Renown, the £600 ramp is stowed within the bus, so is protected against damage and suitable for operators deterred by the cost of installing and maintaining powered ramps. **CEW**

to use gasket glazing

UNTIL now manufacturers throughout Europe have used bonded glazing to provide some of the strength large lowfloor bus bodies need.

This is because the structure bears stresses that were previously borne by the chassis frame on conventional step-entrance buses.

While bonded glazing may look attractive, a sad reality of modern life is that vandals frequently break bus windows. Wright's managing director Jeff Wright says operators prefer the speed, economics and ease of replacement of rubber gasket glazing.

Even with fast cure time, bonded windows take four times

longer to replace than gasket windows, and they often need specialist attention and the vehicle's structural integrity is undermined until the bonded glazing is replaced.

Indeed, Mr Wright says operators probably buy more replacement glass than any other body part.

He expects operators to be attracted by the financial savings resulting from the use of gasket glazing on the Wright Renown with Floline system.

In addition the body uses the quick-fit body panels common to other bodies in the range.

He says it takes only 14 minutes to replace a full set of panels.



Wright's has developed an economically-priced manual ramp

▼ Coach and Bus

Contest is a big hit

A RECORD number of entries to last month's Corgi Classics competition in CBW ensured stiff competition for the coveted post-war Balloon tram on offer.

We asked you three simple questions as an eliminator on the route to picking out the six lucky winners. But every single entry was correct, so the trusty CBW hat was overloaded and the forms were drawn from our mailbox instead.

Winners are: Robert Newson, Cowie Leaside finance director; George Peach, Yorkshire Traction commercial director; Joseph Windsor, Joseph's Mini Coaches proprietor; Alan Smith, Welsh Dragon Travel owner; Robert Graham, EYMS chief engineer; and Barry's of Liskeard proprietor Alan Barry.

■ Look out for our special Corgi model offer next week.

▼ Coach and Bus

Appeal for more timetable outlets

Latest edition of national publication out soon

by Mike Morgan

A NATIONWIDE appeal for more sales outlets has been launched by the publishers of the highly-praised *Great Britain Bus Timetable*.

The Government wants it, customers want it, but its editor, Peter White, says he needs more people to push it.

The latest edition of the all-embracing timetable goes on sale later this month, price £11.

It is published by Isle of Wight operator, Southern Vectis, but covers all modes of public transport and all operators throughout Britain, with the exception of urban services and the occasional, market day-type rural service.

In addition there are

three *Getting Around* regional supplements covering Wales, Highlands and Islands, and Rural Yorkshire, which cost £2.50. Operators can buy these guides outright for £1.25 (min 20) or for sale or return at £1.65.

Southern Vectis launched the timetable in 1995 (right). Mr White says the aim is to promote wider use of public transport, particularly in areas where the environment is under pressure.

Operators in some areas have been enthusiastic about the potential offered by such a comprehensive, multi-modal

timetable. Mr White says Stagecoach subsidiaries Inverness Traction and Bluebird are taking bulk orders and FirstBus subsidiary, SWT, is supportive. It has encouraged Great Western Trains to sell the timetable and has organised a formal launch. Blazefield's Yorkshire operating subsidiaries are taking large numbers.

However, this response is far from universal. Mr White says many local authorities are either reluctant to buy stock or don't seem to be interested. And he wonders why more tourist information centres don't stock the timetable.

He said: "It's frustrat-

ing to me that the world is crying out for promotion of public transport but there aren't more outlets for it."

Mr White says the sales outlet could be a newsagent, cafe or guest house. "The *Great Britain Bus Timetable* is a wonderful marketing tool which ploughs investment back to the operator," he said.

■ For further information contact Heather Hodgkins at Southern Vectis on 01983 522456.



▼ Coach

Locketts strikes on World Wide Web



Locketts dip: Hampshire op chooses more Scania's

LUCKETTS of Fareham is the latest operator to go on to the Internet... and has already had inquiries from Canada.

The move into the information super-highway came after discussions at the Guild of British Coach Operators - Locketts is a member - suggesting the GBCO investigate the possibility. Thanks to a computer enthusiast in its part-time driving staff and some nifty footwork, Locketts beat it to the finish line.

"The pages are largely our brochure pages recreated on the World Wide Web," said joint md Ian Lockett. "They have enormous advantages over paper for overseas business."

Inquiries, even by phone, can be directed to the website so that anyone on the globe can see vehicles in the fleet, drivers and even engineers working in the UK at the touch of a button. There is even a special page where bookings can be made direct, specifying details of the coach required, journey and date of travel.

"I want to introduce more

interactive features as we progress," said Mr Lockett, himself a keen supporter of Information Technology. "It's not perfect yet, but I have been surprised at how quickly we were able to get running."

Within a week of going on line and issuing an overnight fax-shot through its computer system, Locketts had more than 250 visits to its pages, generating some "interesting" inquiries, said Mr Lockett.

● LUCKETTS has taken three more Irizar Century coaches (left) on its favoured Scania chassis.

The trio of K113-based vehicles upgrade an existing front-line fleet with an average age of 2½ years. The age profile of the entire fleet is only 3½ years, including coaches which are used in schools work. The new Centurys have 49 seats, air conditioning, and the usual executive refinements used in Locketts' extensive European tour work and private hire.

"We now have 13 Scania's, eight of which are Centurys," said Ian Lockett.





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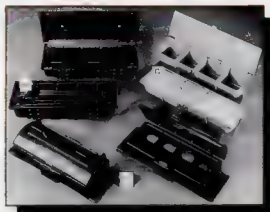
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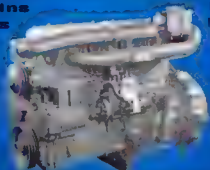
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▼ Coach and Bus

Polish transport looks to West



Jonckheere Mistral with DAF running gear was completed in Poland



Kapena City built on Iveco TurboDaily is priced at around £40,000

Major force on Euro scene

AFTER almost eight years of democratic reforms, Poland has become a major force on the European automotive scene.

Volvo is among the western manufacturers to have established assembly facilities to meet demand while at the same time avoid paying the 30 per cent import duty - though the Polish Government announced a progressive reduction of customs tariffs to zero levels by 2002.

In 1995 Volvo formed a 55/45 per cent joint venture with Finnish body builder Carrus to start bus production adjacent to the Volvo truck plant in Wroclaw.

This facility came on-stream in September 1996 and has a capacity for 250 buses, providing employment for 250 workers. The first tranche of an

order for 40 articulated buses has already been delivered to the Baltic port city of Szczecin and 20 similar units for Warsaw.

Vehicles are already being exported to Sweden with B10M buses for Malmo and Swebus-associated undertakings.

The new B7R lightweight model (CBW, 15 March) will be introduced to the Wroclaw line later this year.

By the end of 1998 Volvo Bus Poland will have stepped up deliveries to 170 units while, by the year 2000, local content will have been increased and the plant's entire capacity geared to Polish orders representing a 13 per cent market share of the country's estimated 1,900 new vehicle intake. **CBW**

Neoplan 15-metre setting pace

by Bill Godwin

WESTERN philosophy has been adopted by a growing proportion of the Polish passenger transport scene. In Poznan, for instance, venue of the recent truck and bus show, locally-assembled Neoplan 15-metre buses are setting the pace. Neoplan's Polish offshoot produced almost 70 buses in the first quarter of this year.

Leading local builder, Jelcz, has had access to Mercedes-Benz technology since the mid-1990s. Its articulated vehicles, including the M-B derived 189-passenger M182, are generally fitted with M-B OM 447 hLA engines.

MAN's local

assembly is getting under way at Poznan and Scania shares a plant with Poland's leading body-builder, Kapena, at Slupsk. Scania-based Kapena buses are going to Swedish operators but the new Kapena City is an Iveco TurboDaily-based 35-passenger mini priced at around £40,000.

Jonckheere is already well established in the Polish coach sector and used the Poznan show to launch a DAF-underframed Mistral 70.

Otoyol of Turkey launched two low-cost midicoaches in Poland 18 months ago. Both are based on Iveco-derived ZETA chassis and are geared to the interurban sector, seating 29 or 20 passengers respectively.



Polish-built Volvos being shipped to Sweden...



...from this plant in a joint venture with Carrus



New lease of life: 38 RMs being fitted with 115 bhp truck units

▼ Buses

Central RMs get Scania power

LONDON Central is re-engining 38 of its Routemasters with nine-litre Scania engines. The naturally-aspirated engines are downrated six-cylinder truck units, designated DS9-9TA.

The engines, used in marine, road and industrial applications, produce 115 bhp, delivering it through the existing Routemaster gearbox.

London Central ordered the engines through Scania Bus & Coach at Worktop, who passed the company on to Scania's specialist engine division: "The result is the new Scania engine - a special build combining rugged construction and durability with the performance demanded by the customer," said director of supply and logistics Paul Hiron.

▼ Coach

Parrys boss denies sale suggestions

There's no way, he says

by Mike Morgan

PARRYS International, the high-profile Cheslyn Hay-based coach operator, has not been taken over and is definitely not for sale, says its founder and owner, Dave Parry.

Responding to industry rumours, Mr Parry was adamant there was no truth in the suggestion that his company was, or was about to be, sold.

"There's no way," he said.

"We are looking

forward to our most successful year and the current exchange rate is a bonus."

The company's plans for its 25th anniversary celebrations in 1998 are already well advanced and Mr Parry confirms that it is committed to another two new coaches for delivery next year.

Meanwhile, its traditional pair of tri-axle Neoplan Cityliners has joined the fleet (CBW, 3 May) and a Volvo/Van Hool will also be delivered soon.



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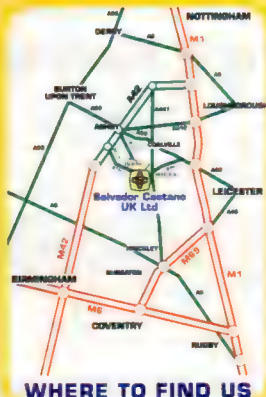
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1992 (J) SETRA TORNADO 215 HD

MAN engine, ZF 7 speed gearbox, Voith retarder, 49 reclining seats & courier seat, sunken centre toilet with continental door, Webasto heating, Sutrak air conditioning, servery unit with water boiler, front mounted fridge, radio/cassette system, 2 TV monitors and video, drivers bunk, drivers door with wardrobe and central locking, repainted white two pack, retrimmed seats. **MoT: 10.02.98 (Ref: 50277/C)**

1990 (PP) DAF DB853000 VAN HOOL ALIZEE

49 seats, 7 spd ZF gearbox, double glazed, centre continental door, drivers bunk, toilet, radio/spech/pa, TV/video, drinks, livery white/blue. **MoT: 15.11.97 (Ref: D/396/C)**

1991 (H) VOLVO B10M MKIII VAN HOOL ALIZEE

49 seats & crew seat, centre sunken toilet, servery, fridge, continental door, radio/PA/cassette, double glazed, blinds to sidewindows, (lap type) seat belts. **Choice Ref: V/336/C**



1991 (H) DAF SB2300 DUPLÉ

57 seats, 6 Speed ZF Splitter Gearbox, double glazed, power door, radio/pa system, livery blue/white. **MoT: 31.03.98 (Ref: V/399/C)**

1983 (PP) SCANIA K112 PLAXTON

49 reclining seats, 5 speed manual gearbox, moquette blue/grey, double glazed, continental door, drivers bunk, power door, toilet, radio/pa system, livery yellow & stars. **MoT: 10.10.97 (Ref: D/398/C)**

1990 (G) LEYLAND PLAXTON TIGER 3200

50 reclining seats, 6 speed ZF gearbox, double glazed, toilet, radio/pa system, drinks, servery, white livery. **Ref: L/389/C**



1990 (G) VOLVO B10M VAN HOOL ALIZEE

49 reclining seats, 6 speed ZF gearbox, double glazed, centre continental door, drivers bunk, auxiliary heater, power door, toilet, radio/pa system, TV/video, drinks, fridge, livery greysilver. **MoT: 10.04.98 (Ref: V/402/C)**

1986 (C) VOLVO B10M DUPLÉ 320

53 seats, 6 speed ZF gearbox, power door, radio, livery cream & blue. **MoT: 31.03.98 (Ref: V/404/C)**

1996 (N) VOLVO VAN HOOL ALIZEE

44 seats, air conditioning, double glazed, continental door, toilet, radio/pa, TV/video, fridge, servery. **MoT 12.03.98. Ref: V/394/C**



1983 (PP) LEYLAND TIGER 245 PLAXTON

48 reclining seats, 6 spd ZF manual gearbox, continental door, toilet, radio, TV/video, drinks, livery gold/red/black. **MoT: 26.04.98 (Ref: L/405/C)**

1989 (F) VOLVO PLAXTON 3500

55 reclining seats, + courier, radio/cassette, 6 speed gearbox, double glazed, parcel shelves, drivers compartment locker, curtains. **MoT: 05.02.98**

1990 (G) TOYOTA OPTIMO II CAETANO

18 seats and courier seat, power door, radio/PA, seat belts, livery blue, **MoT 17.07.97 Ref: T/330/C**



1985 (A) MERCEDES 0303 KONIGHEBERG P50

51 reclining seats, manual 6 spd gearbox, double glazed, centre continental door, drivers bunk, power door, toilet, radio/spech/pa, drinks, fridge, livery white/red. **MoT: 28.03.98 (Ref: M/410/C)**

1990 (G) LEYLAND PLAXTON TIGER 3200

50 reclining seats, 6 speed ZF gearbox, double glazed, power door, toilet, radio/pa system, drinks servery, repainted in white. **MoT: 16.12.97 (Ref: L/389/C)**

1989 (G) LEYLAND TIGER ALEXANDER BELFAST SERVICE BUS

55 seats + 24 standing, livery white, Cummins L10, ZF automatic gearbox, livery white. **Choice of 3**



1990 (G) DAF SB2300 VAN HOOL ALIZEE

51 reclining seats, ZF 6 speed Splitter gearbox, seat belts, centre continental door, toilet, servery unit, double glazed, curtains, TV/video, radio/pa system, interior brown/orange, livery white. **MoT: 28.06.97 (Ref: D/399/C)**

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 1995 M DAF SB3000 WS Van Hoo Alzee 'H', 51R/Toilet
 1995 M DAF SB3000 WS Auto Van Hoo Alzee 'H', 51R/Toilet
 1995 M DAF SB3000 WS Auto Van Hoo Alzee 'H', 51R/Toilet
 1994 L EOS 90 49R, toilet
 1994 L DAF WS3000 Van Hoo Alzee 'H', 51R/Toilet
 1994 L DAF SB3000 Van Hoo Alzee 'DH', 51R/Toilet
 1994 L DAF SB3000 'H' Retarder, Van Hoo Alzee 'DH', 51R/Toilet
 1994 L DAF HS2700 Auto Van Hoo Alzee 'H', 51R/Toilet
 1994 L MB230LT Auto Van Hoo Alzee 'H', 51R/Toilet
 1993 K DAF SB3000 Van Hoo Alzee 'DH', 51R/Toilet
 1993 K DAF SB3000 Van Hoo Alzee 'H', 51R/Toilet
 1993 K DAF SB3000 Auto Van Hoo Alzee 'H', 51R/Toilet
 1993 K DAF SM230LT Van Hoo Alzee 'H', 51R/Toilet
 1992 J DAF SB2306 Duple 340, 52R
 1992 J DAF SB3000 Van Hoo Alzee 'DH', 51R/Toilet
 1992 J DAF MB230LB Van Hoo Alzee 'H', 51R/Toilet

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 1995 M DAF SB220 Auto, Northern Counties
 Palatin, 49 str bus
 1995 M DAF DB250 Auto, Northern Counties
 Palatine II, 77 str double deck bus
 1995 M DENNIS DART Auto, 10M, Plaxton
 Pointer, 40 str bus
 1992 J DAF SB220 Auto, Karus C. bus, 48 str bus
 1992 J DAF MB230 LT Van Hoo Alzee 'H', 51R/Toilet
 1991 H DAF SB2306 Van Hoo Alzee 'DH', 51R/Toilet
 1990 G MB230LB Van Hoo Alzee 'SH', 53R/Toilet
 1990 G MB230LB Van Hoo Alzee 'H'
 1990 G DAF SB3000 Van Hoo 'H', 49/Toilet
 1989 F DAF SB2306 Van Hoo Alzee 'DH', 53R
 1989 F DAF MB230LT Plaxton 3500, 51R/Toilet
 1989 F DAF MB230LB Plaxton 3500, 52R
 1988 E DAF MB230LB Plaxton, 51R/Toilet
 1988 E DAF SB2300 Van Hoo Alzee, 51R/Toilet
 1988 E DAF MB230LT Plaxton 3500, 51R/Toilet
 1988 E DAF MB230LB Plaxton 3500, 53R

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 1993 K DAF SB2700 HS, Caetano A girve, 53R
 1990 G VOLVO B10M Plaxton 3500, 49R/Toilet
 1990 G DAF DHTD Duple 320, 57R
 1990 G SB3000 VAN HOOL ALZEE DH, 51R/Toilet, air con
 1989 G SCANIA K113 Van Hoo Alzee 'SH', 49R/Toilet
 1989 F SB3000 VAN HOOL ALZEE DH, 51R/Toilet, air con
 1989 F VOLVO B10M Van Hoo Alzee 'H', 53R
 1989 PP BOVA FUTURA FHD, 49R/Toilet
 1989 SB3000 Plaxton 3500, 51/Toilet
 1988 VOLVO B10M, Plaxton 3500, 49R/Toilet
 1988 PP BOVA FUTURA FHD, 49R/Toilet
 1988 E DAF SB3000 Van Hoo Alzee 'DH', 51R/Toilet
 1988 E SB3000 Van Hoo Alzee 'SH', 49R/Toilet
 1987 E DAF SB2300 Plaxton 3500, 53R, air conditioned
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▼ Europe

Breaking new ground



'Short breaks by coach price sensitive'

Eurolines expands horizons

REDUCED prices and new tours to Germany feature in the 1997/98 programme of European short breaks launched by Eurolines and National Express.

The *Euro Breaks* brochure includes holidays in Cologne for the first time, plus new tours to Futuroscope, near Poitiers, based in the Ibis Futuroscope Hotel.

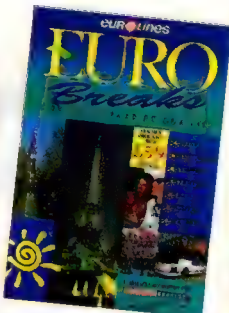
Prices start from £59 - £8 cheaper than 1996 - for a two-day break in Paris, staying at the Hotel La Mascotte. The rate includes continental breakfast and travel from Victoria Coach Station.

by William Golden

Holidays in Budapest, the Hungarian capital, are available from £141 for a minimum of two nights.

Regional departures are available nationwide through National Express connections to Victoria. Groups of 10 or more people qualify for a year-round of five per cent discount off the total package.

Jason Chapman, National Express Holidays' product development manager, said: "Thanks to the strength of the pound,



we have been able to bring down prices for all the short breaks in the programme.

"Lead-in rates for Paris, Amsterdam and Bruges have been reduced by £8, £4 and £11 respectively. The price for a two-night break in Budapest has been reduced by £38.

"Short breaks by coach are extremely price-sensitive and we are confident that *Euro Breaks* offer very competitive deals."

▼ Europe

ICT gives operators the Winter Option

OPERATORS have the option of adding a range of special events to Winter tours thanks to a new initiative from Independent Coach Travel (ICT), the London-based wholesaler.

Options features 17 destinations to the UK, Ireland and mainland Europe and each tour has an *Options* Plus section that includes a range of pre-bookable add-ons. The brochure, which is valid from October 1997 to April 1998, includes two-night city breaks in Paris for £25; Brussels and Amsterdam for £38;

and Bruges and London for £47. Accommodation is on a bed and breakfast basis. Festive offers range from three-night Turkey and Tinsel packages for £65 to a six-night Tyrolean Christmas Special, based in a four-star hotel, for £229.

The *Option Plus* packages include a champagne dinner and cabaret in the Casino de Calais for £28 and a special menu at Planet Hollywood in Paris, Disneyland Paris or London for £12.50. The latter includes a one-hour open bar.

Operators can also book a tour of an Amsterdam diamond factory that guarantees a real diamond for one client.

ICT product manager Ben Pinsent said: "*Options* clearly follows our policy of producing a complete service as a wholesaler to coach operators and group organisers. It does not suffice for us to provide quality travel itineraries and competitive prices - we must clearly help operators in pre-booking for their clients an attractive selection of things to see and do."



Eurowatch

WEATHER

City	Average temperature last week	City	Average temperature last week
Amsterdam	7C/45F	Madrid	14C/57F
Athens	21C/70F	Oslo	7F/45F
Berlin	10C/50F	Paris	4C/39F
Brussels	9C/48F	Rome	18C/64F
Dublin	9C/48F	Stockholm	9C/48F
Lisbon	17C/63F	Vienna	14C/57F
Luxembourg	6C/43F	Zurich	9/48F

DIESEL PRICES

Country	Diesel price per litre in Sterling	Country	Diesel price per litre in Sterling
Courtesy AA Roadwatch			
Austria	0.50	Luxembourg	0.40
Belgium	0.48	Netherlands	0.48
Eire	0.55	Norway	0.67
France	0.49	Portugal	0.42
Germany	0.48	Spain	0.43
Greece	0.40	Sweden	0.54
Italy	0.55	Switzerland	0.55

HOLIDAY POUND

Country	Currency exchange rate	Country	Currency exchange rate
Austria	19.27 Sch/£	Italy	2,737 Lire/£
Belgium	56.53 Bfr/£	Netherlands	3.07 Gld/£
Denmark	10.50 K/£	Norway	11.35 Nkr/£
Eire	1.05 Punt/£	Portugal	275 Es/£
France	9.22 F/£	Spain	230 Pta/£
Germany	2.73 DM/£	Sweden	12.51 Skr/£
Greece	437 D/£	Switzerland	2.32 Sfr/£

Coach and Bus Week ending 17 May 1997



▼ PCV licensing

Driver escapes with warning

AN Andrews Sheffield Omnibus driver, who had been convicted of assault occasioning actual bodily harm, has escaped with a warning from North Eastern deputy traffic commissioner Brian Horner.

The deputy commissioner had been considering taking action against the PCV driving licence of Anthony Herbert, of 18 Beldon Place, Norfolk Park, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, at a Leeds disciplinary inquiry. Mr Herbert had been sentenced to nine months jail, suspended for two years, with a 12-month supervision order, after being convicted at Sheffield Crown Court of assaulting Horace Martlew.

Mr Martlew's sister, Carol Martlew, said that, as an ex-bus driver herself, she had thought it right to report the matter to the commissioner. If anyone had done what Mr Herbert had done to her brother when she worked for South Yorkshire Transport, they would have been dismissed and they would have lost their licence. Somebody who had a temperament like Mr Herbert's was likely to lose their temper when getting hassle from drunks on a bus at night.

"You have to take a lot of hassle and stick from drunks when on the buses," she said. She agreed the incident had not occurred on a bus but on her brother's driveway following a dispute over the parking of his vehicle, Mr Herbert's mother living next door to her brother.

Probation officer Jim Todd said it was perfectly plain the Crown Court had taken the view it was a serious offence, as a custodial sentence had been imposed. The fact the sentence was suspended showed the court had taken an exceptional view of the circumstances. One of the factors in that decision was the risk of re-offending.

The offence had been committed in March 1995, over two years ago. The regrettable circumstances in which Mr Herbert assaulted Mr Martlew were not relevant to his job as a bus driver, and

he had been impressed with his attitude, said Mr Todd.

A Transport and General Workers Union representative told the deputy commissioner he had worked for Mainline for 18 years and the company did not sack drivers straight away, there being disciplinary and grievance procedures.

Mr Horner said he had a letter from Mr Herbert's employers which said he handled any situation that arose during the course of his employment in a correct and proper manner, including one where he was assaulted by a passenger and did not retaliate but reported the matter.

There was also a letter from a police officer, who was a personal friend of Mr Herbert's, said the deputy commissioner. That letter said he had never seen him lose his temper and he felt he would need to be extremely provoked before doing so. He had heard other people describe Mr Herbert as "a gentle giant."

Mr Herbert said he had worked for the company for two years. He no longer visited his mother as things were now and he gave every assurance that such conduct would be avoided in the future.

There were many incidents where he had been spat at, hit with bottles and punched, and he had never retaliated, said Mr Herbert.

Taking no action, Mr Horner said he wanted to make it very clear that, though the incident was not directly concerned with Mr Herbert's work, anyone who dealt with the public, from school children to the elderly, took on a great responsibility and that an exemplary standard of behaviour was required from them.

If there was to be another incident of this sort, he would have to view it with considerable concern and decide whether Mr Herbert had the right temperament to hold a pcv driving licence. It was his job to ensure that anyone who drove a PCV vehicle acted responsibly. He was giving Mr Herbert an opportunity of proving he could do so.

▼ Maintenance

Three days

Commissioner told how most of operators

ARSONISTS attacked Knotty Bus and Coach on three consecutive days last October, resulting in the vast majority of its fleet suffering damage.

This was revealed when Martin and Sandra Hearson, trading as Knotty Bus and Coach, of Unit C, Parkhouse Industrial Estate, Chesterton, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, appeared before West Midland traffic commissioner John Mervyn Pugh at a Birmingham disciplinary inquiry because of concern over their maintenance standards. The partners held an O-licence for 11 single deckers.

Mr Hearson said the bulk of their fleet had been MoT tested over the previous three months and one vehicle was currently being prepared for test. None of the vehicles listed as not being taxed was currently operated, either having been sold or damaged by fire.

Questioned about a vehicle given an immediate prohibition in March for low brake efficiency and an oil leak, which had been endorsed as showing a significant maintenance failure, Mr Hearson said they had only acquired the vehicle a couple of days prior to the

by Michael Jewell

imposition of the prohibition following an accident. It was a vehicle they had bought to sell on. They had checked it over and had tested the brakes with a Tapley Meter before using it and it had pulled up all right.

Mr Hearson said they had been the victims of an arson attack on three consecutive days last Oc-

Mr Hearson agreed it was an ageing fleet. He put the spring damage down to wear and tear. He enjoyed operating older vehicles

tober. They were called to the garage one afternoon and found it ablaze. The following morning the first driver in called them out and a second lot of vehicles were on fire. The next morning they were again called to the garage where they found the vehicles so far not damaged to be ablaze. It had created a lot of problems and they had supplemented their income

'Mild warnings' for Jeffs



Jeffs Coaches of Brackley: concern over its maintenance

of arson attacks

Fleet was damaged

since by buying and selling vehicles. The vehicle involved in the accident had only worked a few hours the day before and a couple of hours the day of the accident before it occurred. The defect turned out to be inside the spring brake chamber. They did not have a rolling road brake tester and all their brake tests were done with a Tapley Meter. If he had known the vehicle had any defect that made it unsafe it would not have gone through the gate.

Mr Hearson agreed a vehicle had been given a prohibition in January for a damaged tyre. Commenting on a prohibition imposed in February for inoperative stop lights, Mr Hearson said it was a recurring problem with the vehicle concerned as the stop light switch was incredibly frail.

Agreeing it had failed the smoke meter test when presented for clearance, Mr Hearson said it had gone in for clearance on a cold February day. When the vehicle arrived at the test station there was a delay and it was stood for an hour and 45 minutes before being tested.

The engine had gone very cold by then and it just went over the smoke test limit. When he



Commissioner Pugh: took account of partners' suffering

rang the test station they had said that only the defect items would be checked but in fact the vehicle was given a full test.

Commenting on a delayed prohibition for an inoperative parking brake locking device, Mr Hearson said the plastic collar had become slightly worn but it was still difficult to knock the lever on or off. Of two delayed prohibitions issued for fuel leaks, one in fact related to what was actually water going up the side of the injector, giving the impression of a fuel leak, said Mr Hearson.

Accepting there was a number of prohibitions for broken or fractured spring leaves, Mr Hearson said he agreed it was an ageing fleet but they were also running over roads that had a lot of 'sleeping policemen'. He put the spring damage down to wear and tear. He enjoyed operating older vehicles.

Consultant engineer Graham Howard said he had taken on the quality control and audit of the firm's maintenance system at Mr Hearson's request. The vehicles were being inspected every four weeks and he was going to personally vet all the new buses when they arrived. In addition, he would spot check vehicles at regular intervals.

Mr Pugh said he was concerned that the defects found on the vehicle involved in the accident could have contributed to the accident.

Mr Howard said the prob-

lem had been that the fault was an internal one which would not have been revealed by visual checks. Even if the driver had 'brilliant brakes' he doubted he would have been able to stop in time. He would ensure that the firm's vehicles were roller brake tested in the future. Mr Hearson said they were running 10 vehicles at the moment. Since the arson attacks they'd had to hire-in, borrow and buy a lot of vehicles. There had been far-reaching consequences and it had been a struggle to maintain their services.

Mr Pugh said operators did not get second chances under the new licensing system but Mr Hearson said he was in the industry because he enjoyed operating the vehicles. "I take no pride in being here today," he said.

Cutting the authorisation to 10 vehicles, and requiring that they all have fresh MoT tests within 14 days, Mr Pugh said he took account of the fact the partners had suffered a lot because of the arson. However, they could put their licence in jeopardy by using vehicles they were dealing in unless they bought them on condition they came with a fresh MoT certificate.

He did not want to see the firm off the road but his duty was to the public to ensure the vehicles they operated were safe vehicles. They had really been given a second chance today, as this was their second appearance at a public inquiry.

▼ Licensing

O-licence revoked but new one issued

THOUGH revoking Stephen Akiens' O-licence, Eastern traffic commissioner Brigadier Compton Boyd has granted an application for a fresh licence by a company formed to take over the business.

Mr Akiens, of Unit 1, 63 Morris Road, Leicester, who traded as West End Travel & Car Hire, of Leicester, appeared at a Cambridge public inquiry at which an application by West End Travel & Car Hire Ltd, of the same address, for six-vehicle international licence was also being considered.

Evidence was given the company had, in fact, been operating for some time and that a number of prohibitions had been placed on West End vehicles because of their condition. In addi-

In granting the application, Brigadier Boyd said he was only prepared to do so for two vehicles

tion, the nominated transport manager had been changed without notification.

Revoking Mr Akiens' licence, Brigadier Boyd said he did so on the grounds:

- There had been a material change to the licence in that there had been a change of entity;
- There had been prohibitions issued to his vehicles;
- There had been a failure to fulfil undertakings made in Mr Akiens' application for a licence, namely his vehicles would be kept in a fit and serviceable condition and that drivers would report mechanical faults as soon as possible;
- There had been a breach of a licence condition in that there was a change of transport manager that was not notified to the traffic commissioner within 28 days.

In granting the application, Brigadier Boyd said he was only prepared to do so in respect of two vehicles.

CBW

and Basfords



TWO operators based in Northamptonshire received what Eastern traffic commissioner Brigadier Compton Boyd described as "mild warnings" at a Cambridge public inquiry. Basfords Coaches Ltd, of High Street, Green Norton, Towcester, and Ken Jeffs, trading as Jeffs Coaches, of Old Station Yard, Helmdon, Brackley, had been called before the commissioner because of concern over their maintenance records.

records



Are you taking the appropriate steps?

THE number of questions I receive about Drivers' Hours suggests a worrying lack of understanding by operators of this fraught subject. Allied to that, conversations fed back to me by drivers of discussions they have had with other drivers indicates that too many of them for comfort have gross misunderstandings of the rules to which they should be working.

This is a matter of grave concern. For all the advice I hear is that there is already far more action by the enforcement authorities to monitor driving hours compliance than may have previously been the case. Operators should expect routine in-depth tachograph disc checks in the future. Not just if they are suspected of infringements, but on a random, routine, basis. Not just a few sample discs, but an in-depth check of a considerable number.

I do, therefore, strongly recommend all operators to check they are doing absolutely all they can to ensure that they, and their drivers, understand the rules and obey them. A recently reported case in the Court of Appeal (Wing v. Nuttall - Times Law Reports, 30 April 1997) and in *CBW* last week buttresses the message I have been giving in this column for a long time - employers have a duty under EC Regulations 3820 and 3821/85 to make sufficient periodic checks of tachograph charts to ensure the Drivers' Hours rules have been complied with and, if breaches are discovered, to take appropriate steps to prevent their repetition.

In this column on 25 January 1997 I produced a check-list that could be copied and used to bring tachograph errors to the attention of drivers. Any operator not using something akin to this would be well advised to do so forthwith. Heed the story of Mr Nuttall, who trades as Redline Coaches. He had not been making periodic checks of his drivers' discs but managed to convince magistrates that his failure to do so did not amount to reckless behaviour as he had no rea-

Redline boss guilty of tacho breaches



Inquiry adjourned over non-receipt of call letters

FLASHBACK: appeal ruling has massive implications

son to believe that breaches were occurring. The magistrates obliged by acquitting him.

This did not impress the Vehicle Inspectorate, who had brought the prosecution. It was the VI which took it to the Court of Appeal. There it was held that Mr Nuttall's failure to inspect a sample of discs amounted to a "reckless shutting of eyes bordering on negligence." They allowed the appeal by the VI and directed the magistrates to convict.

As well as avoiding the problems and fate of Mr Nuttall, there is another good reason why operators should comply to protect the public image of the industry. In delivering the decision of the Court of Appeal Mr Justice Poppelwell observed: "Drivers were well known to exceed permitted hours." We can all do without that sort of condemnation of the standards of the industry ringing in the ears of our customers.

This particular case was about a failure to inspect tachograph discs (a duty which did not exist when tachograph records first came on stream under EC Regulation 543/69, but which has been in place since the 1985 regulations came in to force). It did not, therefore, have to determine the practical meaning of "take appropriate steps to prevent repetition" (of irregularities discovered).

There is little room to doubt that what is

appropriate would be judged on the evidence of particular circumstances. In some instances, simply bringing it to the attention of the driver(s) concerned may be sufficient - especially if subsequent investigations showed that the non-compliance has ceased. For more serious breaches, or where notification has not worked, meaningful action under the disciplinary procedures of the company would seem to be appropriate.

Let me speak plainly about this.

The ultimate method of preventing repetition of deliberate violations of the driving hours rules is dismissal. Any steps which cannot, should the need arise, lead to this final solution, are pretty meaningless. A driver who is going to cause problems through wilful non-compliance with Drivers' Hours rules is just as much a liability to an employer as one who is not punctual, or given to petty theft, or abusive to passengers, or plain incompetent.

But, and it is a very big but, "appropriate steps" could be construed as making sure that the driver was fully aware of the rules with which he was expected to comply. Readers will note that I only suggest dismissal as a possibility where there is wilful (as opposed to ignorant) non-compliance. Although I am unaware of it ever having been tested in the courts (yet! - do you really want to be the test case?), I have never doubted that "appropriate steps" places an effective burden on employers to ensure that drivers do have a working knowledge of the rules.

As my opening remarks suggest, precious few operators give drivers any advice or instruction. I fear that they are leaving themselves wide open to prosecution for not taking "appropriate steps" - not to mention the perils attendant on having drivers convicted for hours offences. In a fortnight this column will take the form of another 'cut out and copy' page and will give drivers the information they need to know for EC driving hours compliance.

Wider coaches: we may wait some time

A WEEK or two ago the leader editorial in *CBW* observed that the maximum permitted width of coaches had been increased from 2.5 metres to 2.55 metres - but that no-one appeared to have heard about it. I feel it to be more a case of 'There's none so deaf... etc'. This increase, of about two imperial inches, was known to me and to all CPT members (including the manufacturers in the suppliers sector) by the time it came in to force in January 1996.

Although the industry, and its passengers,

would welcome an extra half inch width on each seat, I can well see that the design and re-equipping costs are quite high. It is not just a matter of putting a couple of inches in the middle. At the very least it involves totally rejigged seats and mountings and the size of front and rear glass. It may even involve the underframe and running gear, as moving body weight out by even an inch each side on existing axle widths could make the vehicle fail the UK tilt test.

It may be years before we get these two

inches. Why do I say that? It must be far easier, in manufacturing terms, to increase the length of a coach. And the benefits of possibly an extra inch of legroom per (unmodified) seat would be immense. Yet after the best part of 20 years of us having 12-metre coaches, some manufacturers are, literally, selling us short. I cannot believe the 12-metre maximum length has not been brought to their attention. Size is important - both the width and the length.

CBW



If you like coaches...

GAWD bless ya, Ian Allen," the cry rings along London streets. For coach operators can now set up all night reminiscing over a copy of the publisher's *London Coach Operators in Colour: 1950-1980*.

The book does not, we must emphasise, feature pictures of the operators themselves, which would be commercial suicide for a publisher.

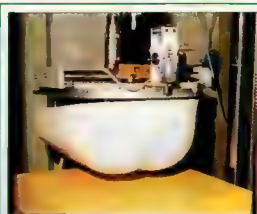
Instead, it features pictures of coaches long gone (and a few still doing schools runs). Jeff



No ops...but never mind

Johnson has acquitted himself well in editing the book. It has brief, informative captioning in place of the usual diatribe of trivia, and the widest possible variety of pictures - some of which merit a space for their historic value, though not their image quality.

If you like coaches, you'll like this book. It's £12.99, as if you cared about the price.



What a cheek: but we like it

Getting those bums on seats

IT must be said that the engineer who designed and made this device had some trouble explaining his work to his friends.

"Made an artificial bum at the weekend..." trotted out casually, would raise a few eyebrows. "German cheek pattern, detects any significant up-thrust, and can bounce around on a simulator for days without moaning..."

Yes. It's all about bums on seats. Dutch research institute TNO made it so they could look into better seat design.

Don't mention the minibus

DAVID Waterman of AVE Berkhof was fairly explicit about a short article we spotted in *Minibus & Community Vehicles* magazine: "Don't mention it," he said.

Anyway, the article suggested, in roundabout fashion, that a modern, smart-looking, low-floor minibus based on Peugeot Boxer may be available in right-hand-drive form at the end of 1997 "at the earliest" - possibly a euphemism for "if there's enough interest."

The Pro-City vehicle is worthy of mention

because it is made by Berkhof subsidiary Denolf & Depla in the Netherlands, and features the company's own rear axle and suspension system. This gives a floor height of 340 mm, and, from the picture we saw, acres of sightseeing glass all round.

We are left wondering what demand there might be for low-floor minis, including Crystals' TBP Freeway design, acquired recently? Then again, it's probably best that we don't mention it... unless you do.



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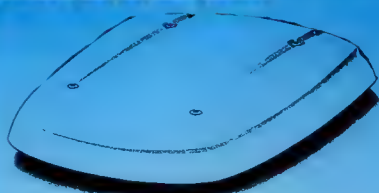
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1989 MERCEDES BENZ 0303 (M) 12M 53 reclining seats (VOGEL), red/orange/yellow moquette, courier seat, rear continental door, tinted side windows with roller blinds, power entrance door with pease window, full SUTRAK air conditioning, carpet to gangway and driver's area, finished all white. **M.O.T. JULY 1997**

1985 VOLVO B10M (A) BERKHOFF EMPEROR fitted with ZF fully automatic gearbox with integral retarder, 60 reclining seats, red striped moquette, courier seat, toilet, drink's machine, tinted double glazed side windows with blinds, power entrance door, finished cream/maroon. **M.O.T. JUNE 1997**

1980 VOLVO B55 (M) PLAXTON SUPREME IV 12M 53 seater, red striped moquette, power entrance door, finished in white with lilac relief. **M.O.T. AUGUST 1997**

1989 VOLVO B10 (M) CAETANO ALGARVE 53 seater, brown striped moquette, power entrance door, finished all white. Private number plate. **NEW M.O.T.**

1989 DENNIS JAVELIN 240 (M) PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3200 51 reclining seats, grey striped moquette, rear outside toilet, continental door, T.V. video, water boiler, power entrance door, finished white/orange/yellow. **M.O.T. MARCH 1996**

1987 VOLVO B10M PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3200 53 reclining seats, brown moquette, tinted double glazed side windows, power entrance door, finished white with blue stripes. **M.O.T. DECEMBER 1997**

1990 DAF SB 2300 (M) 599 JONCKHEERE 51 reclining seats, grey striped moquette, courier seat, centre sunken toilet, continental door, drink's machine to video, double glazed power entrance door, finished white/yellow/orange. **M.O.T. JANUARY 1996**

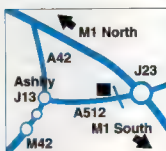
1987 MERCEDES (M) 307D 12 seater, grey/red/orange striped moquette, overhead luggage racks, radio and PA tape, finished all white. **M.O.T. JANUARY 1996**

1985 DAF DKFL VAN HOOL ALIZEE (M) 12M 50 reclining seats (recent retrim) in Holdsworth Brown moquette, courier seat, rear outside floor mounted toilet, tinted side windows with curtains, power entrance door, finished red/cream. **M.O.T. JULY 1997**

1993 PLAXTON 425 INTEGRAL (M) powered by CUMMINS L10 290 BHP ENGINE TELMA retarder, 53 reclining seats, footrests, armrests to aisle, tinted side windows, curtains, centre continental door and steps, courier seat, radio and PA tape, brown/orange moquette, finished white with grey skirt. **M.O.T. SEPTEMBER 1997**

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LETTER OF THE WEEK



Unfair treatment must end

From Ian Delaine-Smith

AS John Prescott heads up the new Government's super department, merging transport and environment, I think it is time to ask a fundamental question: "Why do operators have to pay tax on energy used for buses?"

Labour has pledged to take closer control of the transport system, promising tighter transport planning to favour the environment (CBW, 10 May). Inevitably this policy will favour public transport - in particular local bus services.

Buses meet essential transport needs more than trains or planes. Fuel Duty Rebate recognised the importance of bus services to society yet it has been frozen and over recent years each successive increase in fuel duty has either been passed on to the passenger or been absorbed by the operator.

Putting this added tax burden on local bus services makes it more difficult to attract more passengers. Fares are increased or services cut.

This not only conflicts with the Govern-

ment's drive to reduce car use and cut pollution, but highlights the fact that neither rail nor air operators pay tax on the energy they use.

This unfair treatment of the bus industry should come to an end and, at the very least, the full value of Fuel Duty Rebate be restored.

*Ian Delaine-Smith
Chairman
Delaine Buses Ltd
Bourne
Lincs*

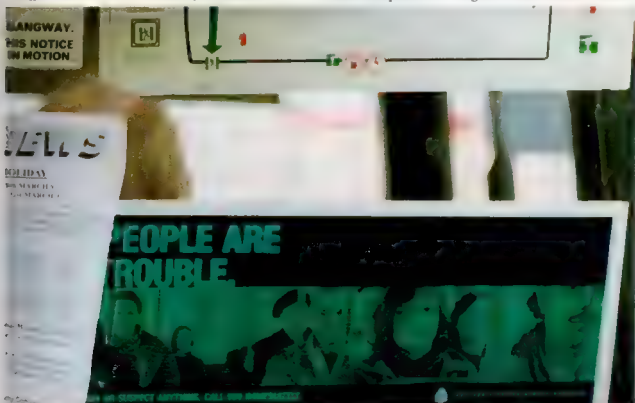
■ Transport now has two voices in the Cabinet through John Prescott and transport minister Gavin Strang. It's a very encouraging breath of fresh in the environment/transport debate. However, the coach and bus industry cannot afford to rest on its laurels, assuming all will be well. The case for public transport - buses in particular - is very strong but the arguments need to be given a very high profile. FDR should not have been eroded in the first place and now is the time to fight for its restoration — Ed.

Policy on passengers?

From Charles Banks

Below is a picture taken of the driver's screen on a trip I recently took — the police campaign 'This group of people are looking for trouble' shows bus passengers seated on a bus.

Unfortunately, the desire to inform the travelling public about the Easter holiday bus arrangements may have unintentionally highlighted company policy on passengers. This I did consider to have experienced when catching a night bus service on Saturday 27 March.



Get the message? Is this the bus operator's policy towards its passengers?

About 20 of us had arrived at a bus stop in the city centre for the 3am bus — some had asked the bus station for confirmation that it would run at 3am and not 4am, others had asked incoming drivers.

At 3.15am I phoned the local depot, who said they'd been told to run the bus at 4am, and hoped that the driver would not be given too hard a time, when the bus, which went into service with this run, arrived. Most of us could have enjoyed an extra hour in our nice warm folk festival club or night spot, but instead faced an hour of shivering and entertainment from a drunken Judy Garland look alike. Heaven help the bus operator if we go for this bus in October

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CORGI CLASSICS

Letter of the week
wins a Corgi
Classics model bus

and it leaves at 2am instead of 3am.

*Charles A Banks
Perth*

Bikes on bus progress

From Dave Holladay

The bike on bus concept progresses, and we are fitting a vehicle up for a VTP5 inspection as I write, with a rack at the back and CCTV monitor. It should be going into service later in the month if all requirements are met, and I am laying claim to the last bike to travel on a British Rail train, and the first on a NatEx Scotrail one. With so many bus operators seriously into trains will we see a change in your title?

*Dave Holladay
Glasgow*

■ In fact, you already have. Our sister publication *Transit* deals with rail and light rail issues — Ed.

Thanks for the model

From Richard Bowler

I am writing to thank you most sincerely for the Corgi Limited Edition Model, RM1933, which arrived in the post today. To say I am delighted with it would be a total understatement and it will take 'place of honour' in the office.

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Change of gear

It's four years since Mike Morgan put the UK's first Volvo B12 through its paces. There's now a new engine and gearbox, so how does it compare?

THERE'S no doubting three axles and a 12.1-litre engine add prestige to any chassis. Put it under a 71-seat double-deck coach body painted in the striking Superfast livery of Taunton-based Berrys and you have a vehicle guaranteed to grab attention.

It's a coach you can't ignore and, when offered the opportunity to test drive, it was impossible to refuse.

Size isn't everything but the B12's vital statistics ensure it stands out from the crowd. No matter which angle you care to choose this is an impressive vehicle which has the added flavour of relative scarcity when compared with its ubiquitous mid-engined cousin, the B10M.

B12 double deckers are sold in the UK with Van Hool Astrobel or Jonckheere Monaco bodywork. Being dedicated to high-capacity passenger movements they are usually found on express services.

Berrys Superfast service between the West Country and London is one such example. The Taunton-based company took its first Astrobel-bodied B12 in 1993. Tested by this magazine (CBW, 13 November 1993) it returned better fuel economy than three-axle

Striking: the Volvo B12's vital statistics ensure it stands out from the crowd

Coch and Bus Week ending 17 May 1997



Superfast livery reflects trends and suits the otherwise unchanged Van Hool coachwork

►► B10Ms in the fleet and we were impressed by the performance from the 12-litre Volvo TD 123 ES engine which had plenty of torque, though we found the five-speed ZF automatic struggled under full load.

Berrys took two more, almost identical machines in 1994 and 1995 as it laid the foundations for a five-year replacement cycle. Superfast runs either via M4 or A303 and requires four deckers. But when the fourth B12 drove into the yard it was different.

Build

It was a seductive blend of power and refinement when first tested in 1993 but Volvo's flag-waving B12 has a new engine lurking at the rear and a transmission upgraded to cope with higher power outputs.

In fact, technology has taken a hand in bringing this giant in line with latest developments and keeping the beast within the new emissions regulations. EDC and electronic throttle control were already present but the suspension now has ECS (electronically-controlled self-levelling) and Volvo has opted for the Allison B500 gearbox, bringing more electronics, or Volvo's own G8-EGS.

With the high-torque Volvo D12A Euro 2 engine replacing the TD123 the decision to go for Allison was based on the torque limits of the ZF automatic gearbox. D12 came to the UK in 1993 as the power unit in Volvo's FH trucks. It comes with three power options - 340, 380 or 420 bhp -

and VEB, Volvo's newly-developed and patented engine brake.

VEB utilises the engine's normal lubricating system to open the exhaust valves and thereby increase the compression energy and reduce the expansion energy - ie, as the exhaust valves open, energy normally used to power the crankshaft is released in the exhaust manifold producing a braking effect.

This system is activated as soon as the accelerator pedal is released and cuts out at 1,000 rpm. Maximum braking effect is 240 kW at 2,300 rpm. Claimed reduction in wear on brake components is at least 25 per cent.

Passenger impressions

All this Volvo wizardry may fascinate the engineer but what matters is the quality of service in this air-conditioned express people carrier. Power - a massive 380 bhp on the Berrys machine - should mean swift journey times and Berrys' tachometer charts show the extent to which the B12 can hold the legal maximum uphill and down dale without so much as a blip. Automatic gearbox should mean jolt-free acceleration and deceleration and this Allison box is a gem. Electronic self-levelling should do what it says - keep the ride level - and this decker is excellent.

There's a new livery and vibrant moquette as well. Retaining the Superfast stripes, the livery's graduated fade reflects trends and suits the Van Hool coachwork, which is otherwise unchanged. Seating layout - 57 upstairs and 14 down - is the



High capacity: 71 seater has 57 seats upstairs



Noise from rear-mounted D12 engine is subdued



same but toilet access is improved and the service layout optimised.

Driver impressions

The driving position on this coach is exceptionally good. The broad sweep of Volvo dash is in near perfect relationship to the adjustable steering column and all controls fall immediately to hand.

As with the ZF installation, the gear selector is bolted to the right hand of the dash rather than integrated. However, this touchpad control sits comfortably just an arms length away ready for instant use.

Being Allison, this gear selector is literally touch and go - just remember to press hard on the footbrake otherwise the coach remains stationary.

It's a five-speed box but you'd be hard pressed to notice all the changes. They are so smooth that you need to watch the rev counter for any sign of movement into a different ratio. Progress from standstill to 110 km/h is sheer pleasure - and fast... Superfast.

Performance

Thirty miles an hour comes up in 11 seconds and 50 mph in 28 seconds - statistics that don't tell the full story because it's the effortless way it performs that impresses.

Acceleration is drive-by-wire and the engine note so subdued that its abilities are quickly taken for granted.

And the VEB adds an important dimension to the package - added safety.

Just lift the accelerator and the braking effect is instant. At first this comes

as a surprise and interrupts smooth driving but you soon appreciate that the slightest touch on the pedal stops the VEB whereas, by thinking ahead, it is possible to drive on motorway or in town with minimal use of the footbrake.

There's a blank plate in the floor as a reminder of how ineffective the redundant exhaust brake would be in comparison - and VEB is much quieter.

Another benefit from the Euro 2 D12A is improved economy. Fuel consumption during the first four weeks in service is a half a mile per gallon better than earlier B12s - that's a 6.25 per cent boost from day one and the engine had yet to cover more than 9,000 miles, so expectations are that it can only get better.

Verdict

Van Hool's Astobel is difficult to fault as a workmanlike and durable product with a well-presented interior that successfully counteracts the claustrophobic effects of tight headroom in a four-metre high double decker.

From the passenger viewpoint the ride comfort is superb and the level of refinement commendable. To drive it is a delight. Only when pushed hard into tight corners do the front tyres protest, otherwise everything remains dignified and upright.

This is a compelling combination of engine and gearbox for the operator with a need for a new decker. If you've got the work for a 71 seater and can justify spending a quarter of a million pounds, it makes good economic sense.

CBSW

SPECIFICATION

Chassis:	Volvo B12 12-metre
Body:	Van Hool Astobel - 71 seats
Price:	£250,000 approx.
Engine:	rear-mounted Volvo D12A Euro 2 with EDC - turbocharged and aftercooled
Power:	380 bhp (279 kW) @ 1,900 rpm
Capacity:	12.1 litre
Torque:	1,253 Lbf ft (1700 Nm) @ 1,100-1,300 rpm
Gearbox:	Allison B500 automatic
Steering:	ZF integral power-assisted - column adjustable for height and rake - 50 cm steering wheel
Brakes:	dual-circuit air system ABS fitted drums on all three axles handbrake - spring release
Suspension:	Volvo Engine Brake full air system, electronically controlled (ECS) self levelling front - two air bags and levelling valves; drive - four air bags and two levelling valves; bogie - two air bags mounted on independent suspension anti-roll bars fitted front and rear double-acting hydraulic telescopic shock absorbers fitted front (4) and rear (4+2) - ferry lift standard - suspension lower with handbrake interlock available
Drive axle:	Volvo final drive EV85/EV90 - single reduction, hypoid type - 3.78:1 ratio 315/80R 22.5
Tyres:	

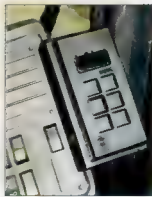
DIMENSIONS

Length:	12 metres
Width:	2.5 metres
Height:	4 metres
Wheelbase:	6.1 metres
Unladen weight:	16,500 kg
GVW:	23,500 kg

PERFORMANCE

Berry's in-service		
consumption:	8.5 mpg	
Acceleration:	0-30 mph - 11 secs	
	0-50 mph - 28 secs	
Fuel tank capacity:	88 gallons (maximum range - 747 miles)	
Noise levels at 62.5 mph:		
	upstairs	downstairs
front	61 dB(A)	74 dB(A)
middle	60 dB(A)	67 dB(A)
rear	64 dB(A)	67 dB(A)

Touch control: Allison gear selector signals smooth changes ahead



The Equalisers

Mark Williams visits a company which specialises in troubleshooting... no matter what the problem

IF there is an ACME of the PSV support industry, it may well be Fleetmaster Bus & Coach. You will no doubt remember that the original ACME was A Company Making Everything, or the pinnacle of achievement, whichever definition you prefer. And there's a bit of both at Fleetmaster.

Run by former Arlington salesman Steve Swain, Steve's wife Jill, and Thamesdown's former engineering director Mark Stephenson, the Horsham-based business is still finding its feet. So far it can lay claim to being sales agent for UVG's S320 coach, East Lancs bus products, Engine Control Systems' AZ catalysts and a novel electrical product which prevents flat battery syndrome.

Operators could also contact Fleetmaster to buy a second-hand vehicle, or to hire one. And, if your own vehicles demand some extra TLC, Fleetmaster can supply you with a diesel fitter, electrician, coach builder or a painter, charged by the hour.

The latter service is closest to the origins of Fleetmaster. After a spell selling re-man engines for Redbridge and Beans, Mr Swain set out on his own and, in the early days, was a bus engineering agent. The idea was breathtakingly simple. Mr Swain had noticed that a great deal of garage time at big operators' premises was going begging. Simultaneously, there seemed to be an undercurrent of enthusiasm for DPTAC-equipped vehicles, at a time when few, new buses were being bought. So he brought together the spare workshop capacity, and the need for retro-fit palm-push bells and handrails.

"The DPTAC thing wasn't as successful as I hoped it would be," admitted Mr Swain. "The market changed very swiftly, from refurbishment to new vehicles, as the big five bus groups emerged. There was also less enthusiasm from those companies to work on competing operators' vehicles."

"So I put engineering on the shelf for a while and, with my background in Arlington's,

Fleetmaster started to evolve as a second-hand coach and bus sales outlet."

A thread running through this tale was Mr Swain's incessant attempts to sell something to Mark Stephenson, working at Thamesdown in Swindon. They got on well, so when Mr Stephenson was looking for a fresh start, he slotted into Fleetmaster very nicely.

He has injected extra vitality into the business, and a large measure of engineering expertise. Not only that, but Mr Stephenson has been instrumental in helping set up the new sales relationships.

"Take the East Lancs thing," he told me. "Steve and I had seen plenty of East Lancs older generation buses and, when we were approached by them to sell the vehicles, went to the factory more out of courtesy than with any idea of taking them up on the offer."

"But when we got there, we realised how much the engineering at the company has been turned around. Within two weeks, we'd been appointed agents and sold some East Lancs buses."

"When UVG's S320 was launched, we talked to UVG about solving their part-ex problem by selling someone a vehicle before delivery of the new coach. We are now selling UVG S320, and the company's Ciistr minibuses."

Fleetmaster's acquired expertise in refurbishment is, of course, for sale but it's also for hire in the shape of a fleet of self-drive coaches. Fleetmaster PCV Hire has deliberately aimed low, acquiring Tiger and DAF Paramount 3200s, retrimming, repainting and painting them white.

"The truck market has had cheap, short-term hire for years," says Mr Swain. "These vehicles are ideal for operators who've rescued the tail end of a contract, and don't know whether they will win it in tender, or even if they want it. They're not Continental tourers, but they're reliable and they're only £50 a day plus VAT to hire."

The fleet also has some Atlanteans, also refurbished, on the hire fleet. Like the coaches, they're prepared before hire but, after that, maintenance is the hirer's responsibility.

Speaking of which, occasions when your fitters are overloaded with work must be an annual occurrence, and a costly one with vehicles standing in the yard waiting for repair. The Fleetmaster Flying Fitter service is a panic line for operators, supplying known and trusted technicians at the drop of a hat.

"They get the sort of money you wouldn't get as a wage, so it's a matter of pride with them to show how well they can do their job. One Welsh operator who had hired one of our guys for a week found he'd done all the work in three days," said Mr Swain.

And, to top off the list of Fleetmaster's portfolio of services, there is the equipment sales area. Fleetmaster is an agency for the catalysts London Transport has specified for its old deckers. AZ Catalysts can reduce smoke by 80 per cent and reduce a range of pollutants. At a starting price of around £1,500 apiece, they're the ideal way of



Modern offices are separate from vehicle yard



Mark Stephenson and Steve Swain head up the company

introducing local authorities to quality partnerships without talking the big money of gas buses or, indeed, new buses: "Operators want an incentive to commit to catalysts, and I can't say I blame them," says Mr Swain.

But perhaps a product which typifies Fleetmaster is the simple, low-cost Battery Guard - an electronic device which constantly monitors battery condition and, should the voltage drop too low for any reason, isolates the battery before it has lost so much charge it won't start the engine.

"It's odd how bus operators in particular seem quite happy to live with the problem of no-starts every morning," said Mr Stephenson. "For £200, this solves the problem, no matter how old the vehicle or what the problem is. In the morning, the driver just resets the

device and starts the vehicle."

Even such a cheap device comes with three years' guarantee, and Fleetmaster is prepared to offer a free trial to any larger operator. Mr Swain has no worries about being exploited by the industry when he offers his trust.

"I sold a vehicle for spares the other day and, against my advice, the buyer decided to drive it home. The bus didn't make it but, when the guy phoned in, I felt responsible to some degree, and organised a recovery to get the bus home.

"The bill was £200, so I wrote to him and asked if he'd make a contribution. He sent me the whole £200. That's why I like this industry, and I can never see myself working anywhere else."

CSW



YEATES/KIRKBY

Why blue skies shine

New Expressliners and Mistral join
Inverness operator. Mark Williams reports

IT'S all change at Rapsons Coaches of Inverness, where three new Plaxton Expressliners and a Jonckheere Mistral have joined the fleet. The new Expressliners, based on Volvo B10M chassis, oust three similar vehicles from the



ROBIN HOOD

Stenning puts on the style for Corporate midi

LUTON-based group travel agency and organiser, Corporate Coaching, has supplemented its usual activities with an RH2000 midicoach.

The air-conditioned, Mercedes-Benz-based coach will be used by the company to provide feeders and small, local private hires for established clients.

It joins two Autobus-built Mercedes-Benz

Sprinters and two Mercedes-Benz limousines in a fleet which doesn't reflect the bulk of Corporate Coaching's work.

The company is a partnership of former Luton & District operations director, Peter Collins, and ex-Seamark manager Doreen Colthorpe (CBW, 1 February). It provides coaching organisation for large ground-

handling exercises.

The new, 29-seat coach has air conditioning and Webasto heating. It has now been supplied to Corporate Coaching twice. After it arrived the first time in its delivery white, Mrs Colthorpe and Mr Collins decided to have it repainted, and Best Impressions design guru Ray Stenning came up with this striking livery.





over Rapsons

company's Inverness-London work, one of which is shown in its new, Scottish Citylink livery.

The Joughneere Mistral, also an B10M, is set up with just 45 seats, tables, video, toilet and servery.



ALEXANDER

Olympians join Capital

CAPITAL Citybus has specified dual doors and 72 seats on a fleet of 16 Olympians in service from Trafalgar Square this Summer.

The Alexander-built deckers have had to be painted London Transport's familiar red - with a band to remind passengers of the company's usual, yellow colour scheme. The buses are on the 91 contract, which runs to Crouch End and Cockfosters. They also feature specified route number displays on front, side and rear.

An addition on test are electronic blinds on one of the buses. The system will allow the driver to adjust destination displays from the cab without leaving his seat: "We will be monitoring passenger reaction with interest," said Citybus md Leon Daniels.

"This route represents a high-profile expansion for the company, which now runs 260 vehicles in and around London and Essex.

Deals In Brief



Into the Future

JOHNSONS of Henley-in-Arden has added two of these Bova Futuras to its fleet. The operator has opted for 49-seat configuration with air conditioning, drinks facility and centre toilet on all three coaches, bought from Moseley PCV of Pontefract.



Caelloi buys Alizee

CAELLOI Motors of Pwllheli went to Moseley PCV for this Van Hool Alizee DH, based on Volvo B10M. The coach has 49 reclining Labelux seats, rear sunken toilet, Webasto heater and Tempo 100 certification.



The keys to success

THE keys of two, new Van Hool Alizee super-executives from Moseley PCV sales manager Alan White land in the hand of Brents general manager Dec Finegan. The Volvo B10M-based coaches have an adaptable configuration, arriving at the Watford operator with 48 seats, servery, floor-mounted toilet, video and air conditioning, but with room for 32 seats and tables for corporate hire.

C&W

TVI buys software business

TVI Europe has purchased the Infotach Fleet Management Software systems business including TCAS and TOPAS, as part of its strategy to expand its existing products and services to customers.

TCAS software is used extensively in tachograph chart analysis by bureaux and fleet operators, with the TVI Scan 4 automatic scanner, or the ACE 491.

TOPAS is a new enforcement software programme which, together with SCAN 4, is tailored to suit the requirements of the Vehicle Inspector and police for roadside or desktop operation.

TVI Europe will be offering the software systems either separately or in conjunction with its existing chart analysing equipment. TVI Europe chairman and md Neil Key said: "The new software system and chart scanning equipment package provides a further opportunity for today's fleet manager to reduce operating costs and increase efficiency."

Tyres save fuel - claim

MICHELIN is claiming fuel savings over five per cent for heavy vehicles running on its Energy tyres.

The Watford-based tyre manufacturer put its theories to the test at MIRA, running two identical Volvo FH12 articulated rigs around the circuit over four days, and before 100 fleet operator witnesses. The results showed an overall reduction of 5.22 per cent in fuel use... almost half a mile per gallon.

A set of control statistics, to eliminate differences in the tractor units, substituted sets of identical tyres to both and used the results to adjust the fuel figures.

Contact your local Michelin supplier.

Dealer on the ball

VOLVO BUS dealer Hargreaves Vehicles (North East) has told us about its plans covering today's (Saturday, 17 May) Wembley FA Cup Final, which features "its area team of Middlesbrough and a certain unknown southern team, Chelsea."

Lucky for Hargreaves, CBW is produced somewhere midway between London and Cleveland so we're still happy to give them a mention. "You may be aware," director Ray King continues, "that Middlesbrough has already had a run to Wembley last month in the Coca Cola Cup Final which prompted our plans to add our support and hopefully gain some publicity along the way regarding our rather special Front Line

Support for supporters' coaches on the road to Wembley. Frank Forster reports

Support Vehicle for Volvo Bus & Coach.

"We are mailing our customers of details of the support service which we are repeating in view of the success of (if that is the right word) the previous ser-

vice cover we provided - we dealt with six breakdowns or incidents on the day.

"Again 200 to 250 coaches will be making their exodus from Teesside early on 17 May and as local Volvo Bus and Coach Dealer we aim to be there alongside the convoy, also at a number of service stations on route, as well as the coach parks at Wembley during the day to offer any needed mechanical assistance."

Hargreaves' £40,000 support vehicle pictured will be available for any coaches which find the strain too much. The vehicle, equipped with a £3,000 state-of-the-art computer, is one of only 10 in the country. Just in case you lost that mobile number, it's 0378 556944/5.



Front line support: Hargreaves provides mobile back-up for Middlesbrough fans

Workshop planner

COMPUTER software specialist Sanderson FCS is expecting a new workshop planning aid to come on line for coach and bus operators later this year. VisiPlan is a new module for Sanderson's existing FleetPlan fleet management package, supplied bespoke to PSV, HGV and car fleet operators. It accepts each job on the basis of the existing workshop bays, staff and the facility available, then allocates a time slot for the work to be done.

The system relies on standard workshop repair times, as yet

provided for cars and light goods vehicles but, by the end of the year, supplier Glas' is expected to have figures for PSVs and HGVs available to use.

VisiPlan gives a graphical representation of the work scheduled to the manager, producing job sheets automatically: "Millions of pounds each year are wasted by industry because of poor maintenance planning," says Sanderson's md John Davis.

Details on 0121 743 8721, fax 0121 742 9932.

Top products integrated

FLEET Software has reached agreement with accounting software specialist Topaz to integrate two top products. FACT, the programme sold by Fleet, manages stock control and fleet engineering, while Insight is Topaz' accounts suite: "Because of the comprehensive nature of the management information we can now combine, we expect to move quickly into those larger sectors," said Fleet md John Rands.

Details on 0114 257 1600.

CBW



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Fax: 01733 467154

Coachmart

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for the third consecutive year.

Pre-owned coaches

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Taxed, MoT Feb '98.
Nice Coach.
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or 0374 651602

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1983 TIGER BERKHOF, 53 seats, MoT 03/98... £14,750
1982 MERCEDES 207D, 17 seats, retinted, MoT 02/98... £1650
1980 LEOPARD DOMINANT II, 12m, 53 seats, MoT 4/98... £4750
1977 LEOPARD SUPREME III, 53 seats, MoT 8/97... £2250
1976 BEDFORD YMT DOMINANT, 53 seats, MoT 6/97... £1650

BUSES

1996 DART/VVG, 43 seats, MoT 5/96, choice of 2... £64,950
1990 TALBOT TRIAXLE, 22 seats, MoT 10/97... £3750
1982 BEDFORD YMT WRIGHT, 60 seats, MoT 3/98... £4750
1981 BEDFORD YMQ DOMINANT, 45 seats, MoT 5/97... £2750
1979 LEOPARD SUPREME IV EXP, 55 seats, +18, MoT 9/87... £4250
1976 LEOPARD DOMINANT EXP, 53 seats, +18, MoT 6/97... £1750
1976 LEOPARD ALEXANDER T, 49 seats, MoT 12/97... £2250

All plus VAT
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12 month test,
49 seats + standees,
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53 seats, full MoT
£7,000 + VAT

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57 seats, MoT Dec 97
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53 seats, full MoT
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All the above vehicles have power doors, seatbelts, radio's etc and are in good all round condition.
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Tel: 01324 482093

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49 seats, centre toilet, drinks servrey, video & TV, MoT March '98
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85 DAF Plaxton 35, 49 recliners, rear sunken toilet, registered 1985, requires engine repair. Also 84 DAF Jonckheere, 49 retinted seats, double glazed, toilet, running order. Also 79 FORD 35 seat Duple II, running order. Offers after inspection.
0141 339 9211 or 0141 221 3165

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.....£67,500 each + VAT

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01525 240630

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1985 DAF MB200 DUPLA CARIBBEAN II, 53 recliners
1980 LEYLAND LEOPARD PLAXTON SUPREME, 51 seats
1987 MERCEDES, 19 seats
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1984 MERCEDES, 12 seats
1982 VOLKSWAGON, 14 seats
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51 seats, toilet, coffee machine, TV/video
£69,000
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COACH

1982 LEYLAND Leopard/Willowbrook, 48 Str, MoT 5/98, Full set of spare glass - extra) £3,750
All plus tyres and VAT
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Bluebus, Horwich, Lancs

1990 (G) VOLVO B10M, Paramount 3500, 44/49 recliners + crew, ZF auto gearbox, air conditioned, toilet, servrey, fridge, carpeted, curtains, radio/PA, choice of 5
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ZF 6 speed gearbox, 53 R+C, provision for video/monitor, radio/PA/cassette, & continental door



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ZF splitter gearbox, 49R+C, retarder, radio/PA/cassette, drinks machine, refrigerator, continental door and centre sunken toilet



92 VOLVO BIOM PLAXTON EXCALIBUR

ZF gearbox, 51R+C, retarder, video/monitor, radio/PA/cassette, rear toilet and continental door



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CONTACT NUMBERS

OFFICE CONTACT

James Sloan 01909 500822

NORTH 0589 444736

WEST MIDLANDS & WALES 0885 594814

Bob Nevitt 0885 594814

EASTERN REGION 0410 056711

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200,000 k, excellent condition,
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Express door, suitable for OMO.
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tinental door, air conditioning, Webasto, fridge, tv and
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reclining seats with arm rests, centre demountable toi-
let, centre continental door, courier seat, moquette to
roof, blinds to windows.

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seats with arm rests, centre demountable toilet, cen-
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49 seats, OMO equipped Grant doors,
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All white,

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New coach forces sale

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68351MAN

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15 seat minibus, MoT May
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(Scotland)

68351MAN

1986 (D) MERCEDES 608D, 20 low back
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1998, power door, radio / cassette, centre
carpet. £3,850 ono + VAT. Tel: Preston
01772 749358/747329.

68215ME

1990 (Jan) G REG MERCEDES 811 TURBO

33 coach seats/lap belts + 8 standees,
T/Windows, racks, boot,
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All white, MoT, '98.

Radio cassette, wheel trims.

Replaced: F/Axle, F/Discs, Radiator,
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75 seats, all usual extras, recently
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- 1988 E VOLVO B10M JONCKHEERE P599, 53 reclining seats, courier, d/glazed, radio/PA, repainted white, new test£62,500
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- 1983 VOLVO B10M VAN HOOL ALIZEE, 49 retrimmed reclining seats, courier seat, centre sunken demountable toilet, radio/PA, immaculate£35,000
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1982 LEOPARD DOMINANT p.o.d., 53 seats,
 T.C. Oct. '97
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1979 NATIONAL 11 METRE GARDNER ENGINE.
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1987 MERCEDES 609D. 19 str. coach - p.o.d.
 New Test.
1987 SHERPA 350. 16 str. service. T.C. Nov. '97
1987 TALBOT. 14 str. coach. T.C. Feb. '98
1986 MERCEDES 310. 12 str. coach. T.C. March. '98
1984 MERCEDES 608D. 19 str. coach. T.C. Feb. '98
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68300/VEH





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Forms including full details are available on application to the Director of Planning and Transportation, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2SG, marked for the attention of the Public Transport Officer, and must be returned to the Assistant Chief Executive and Corporate Solicitor not later than 2 p.m. on Thursday, 5 June 1997.

88320/TEN

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Required for the responsibility for day to day running of operations, to include day contracts and private hire. Successful applicants will have administration skills, knowledge and understanding of PSV operations and legislation. Previous experience essential.

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68281/APP

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A salary and conditions package commensurate with the job will be available.

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HANTS & SURREY

8832/APP

Make a difference at the heart of the UK's public transport industry

One of the country's leading trade association's, the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK is seeking a **Regional Officer** to provide front line membership services to bus and coach operators.

You will need first class presentation skills, effective writing and an ability to assimilate and organise information on a wide variety of legislative issues affecting the industry. Front line industry experience would be useful, but not essential.

Enthusiasm, initiative and commitment to team work are key requirements and experience of committees would be useful.

Serving members in the South East and West Midlands, the post is based at our London office and the salary will be around £15,000.

For a confidential discussion about the post, call Steve Rooney on 0171 240 3131.

To apply, write enclosing a CV, marked private and confidential to: Steve Rooney,
Director Internal Communications,
CPT, Imperial House,
15 - 19 Kingsway,
London WC2B 6UN.



68347/APP

▼ Coach

Plaxton Parts panels post

Move to develop after sales and service



Tuckfield: sales rep

SHEFFIELD-BASED Plaxton Parts & Service has appointed **Alan Tuckfield** its first representative to develop glass fibre panels sales.

Plaxton and Northern Counties decided to develop their after sales and service and recruited Mr Tuckfield from the bus parts industry.

by Frank Forster

Mr Tuckfield reports directly to Plaxton Parts & Service md **Rod May**. Already the company has sought ways to improve its customer service by increasing current stock levels, and introducing 'imprest stock', providing customers with a more efficient

means of stock control.

"Plaxton has much it can offer and understands the needs of its customers," Mr Tuckfield said. "We have introduced more customer-friendly initiatives and have brought our prices in line with current competitors to offer a cost-effective and efficient service on genuine OE parts."

▼ Bus

Woman joins the TWM board

TRAVEL West Midlands has appointed its first woman to the board of directors since it merged with National Express Group in April 1995. **Julie Giles**, 39, has been promoted to commercial director from regional manager (development) and will be involved in business initiatives including acquisitions, property and the develop-

ment of subsidiary bus ops Smiths/Yourbus and Merry Hill Minibuses. Mrs Giles, who lives in Wollaston in the Black Country, qualified as an accountant while working in the nationalised industry sector before joining KPMG. She as worked for TWM for nearly 10 years. "I am delighted to join the board," Mrs Giles said.



Giles: 10 years service

▼ Coach and Bus

PTRC job

JIM Carley, regional officer for the Confederation of Passenger Transport, is to become a course and conference organiser for PTRC Education and Research.

Mr Carley, officer for London and West Midlands, leaves the CPT at the end of this month. He will be staying in London, working at the PTRC's offices in Hammersmith Grove organising special events in the public transport field and in transport planning.

▼ Bus

ITA chairman

SOLENT Blue Line mobile inspector **Andy Evans** has been re-elected the Institute of Transport Administration's Southampton Centre's chairman

CBW



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PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

YOUR COMPANY DETAILS

1. What is your primary job title?

(Tick one only)

- Owner/Director ☐ 01
 Senior/General Manager ☐ 02
 Engineering/Service Manager ☐ 03
 Other (please specify) ☐ 04

2. What is your company's main business function?

- Bus Operator ☐ 01
 Coach Operator ☐ 05
 Coach & Bus Operator ☐ 02
 Local Government ☐ 03
 Other (please specify) ☐ 04

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3. How many vehicles does your company own/operate?

(Tick all that apply)

	Buses	Coaches
1-5	<input type="checkbox"/> 01	<input type="checkbox"/> 10
6-10	<input type="checkbox"/> 02	<input type="checkbox"/> 11
11-15	<input type="checkbox"/> 03	<input type="checkbox"/> 12
16-25	<input type="checkbox"/> 04	<input type="checkbox"/> 13
26-39	<input type="checkbox"/> 05	<input type="checkbox"/> 14
40-100	<input type="checkbox"/> 06	<input type="checkbox"/> 15
101-400	<input type="checkbox"/> 07	<input type="checkbox"/> 16
401-1000	<input type="checkbox"/> 08	<input type="checkbox"/> 17
1000+	<input type="checkbox"/> 09	<input type="checkbox"/> 18

4. Do you have responsibility for the recommendation/purchase and/or specification of the following?

(Tick all that apply)

	Put	Spec	Rec
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Parts/Spares	<input type="checkbox"/> 02	<input type="checkbox"/> 13	<input type="checkbox"/> 24
Oil/Fuel	<input type="checkbox"/> 03	<input type="checkbox"/> 14	<input type="checkbox"/> 25
Breakdown	<input type="checkbox"/> 04	<input type="checkbox"/> 15	<input type="checkbox"/> 26
Insurance/Finance	<input type="checkbox"/> 05	<input type="checkbox"/> 16	<input type="checkbox"/> 27
Fuel Cards	<input type="checkbox"/> 06	<input type="checkbox"/> 17	<input type="checkbox"/> 28
Training	<input type="checkbox"/> 07	<input type="checkbox"/> 18	<input type="checkbox"/> 29
Venue/Attraction Tickets	<input type="checkbox"/> 08	<input type="checkbox"/> 19	<input type="checkbox"/> 30
Ferry Crossing	<input type="checkbox"/> 09	<input type="checkbox"/> 20	<input type="checkbox"/> 31
Hotel Bookings	<input type="checkbox"/> 10	<input type="checkbox"/> 21	<input type="checkbox"/> 32
Theatre Tickets	<input type="checkbox"/> 11	<input type="checkbox"/> 22	<input type="checkbox"/> 33
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/> 34		

5. What type of work does your company undertake?

(Tick all that apply)

Private Hire	<input type="checkbox"/> 01
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European Tours	<input type="checkbox"/> 04
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